THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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No. 68

BIRTHPANGS OF COMMONWEALTH

The Five Dominions assert their freedom

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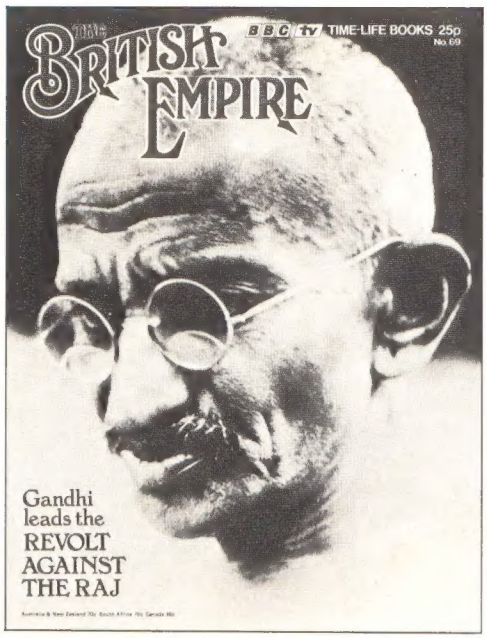

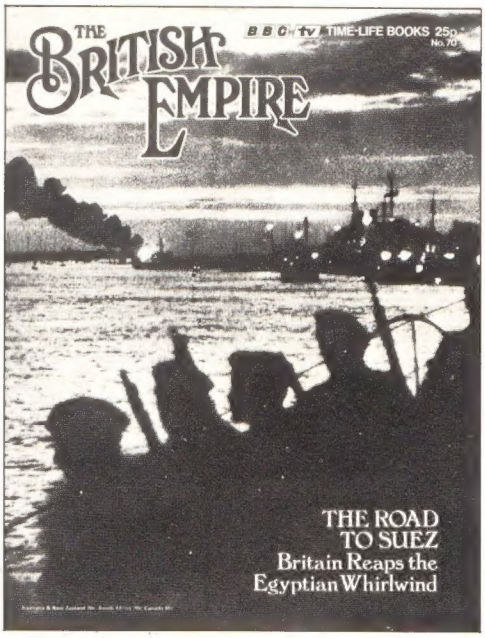

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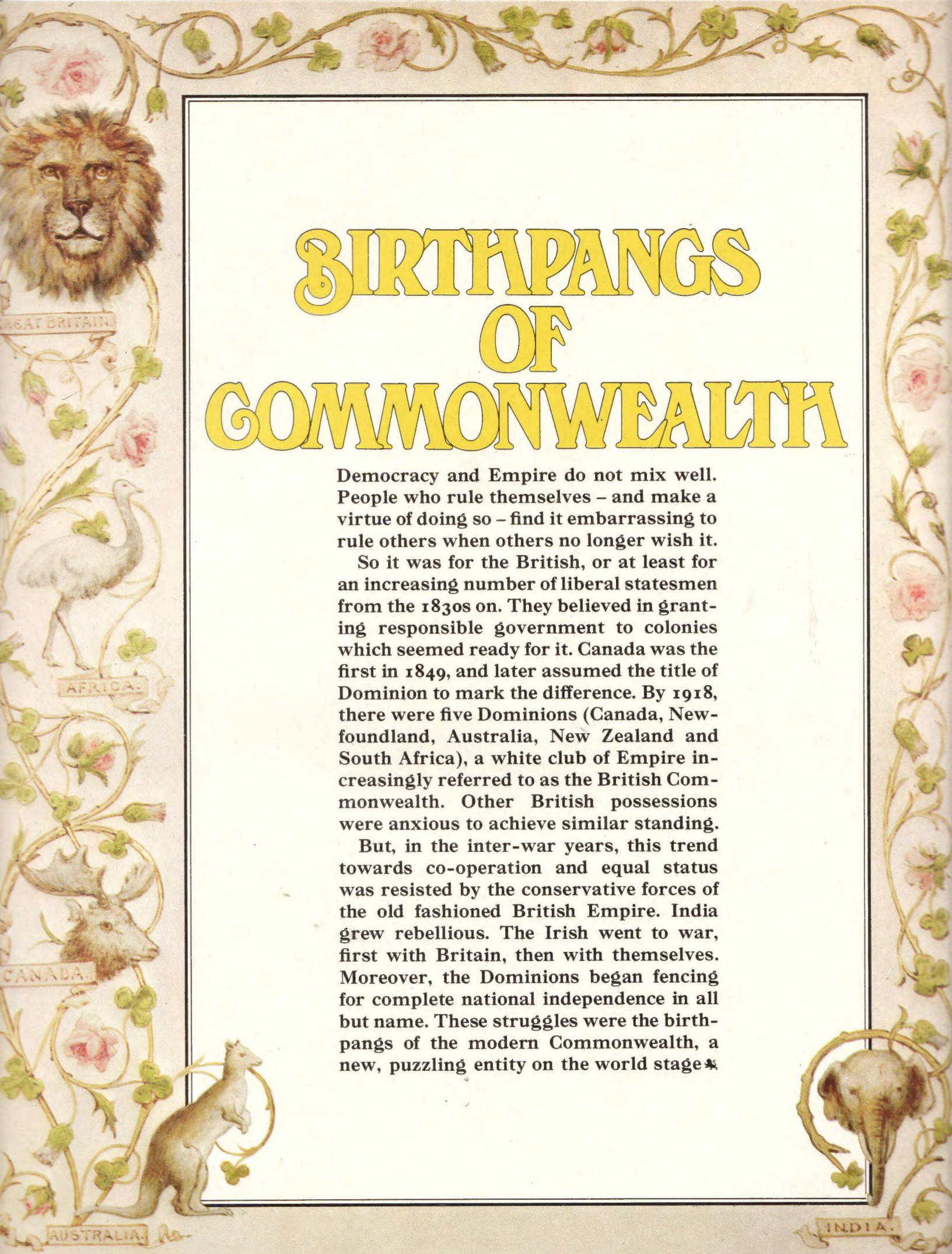


BIRTHPANGS OF COMMONWEALTH

Democracy and Empire do not mix well. People who rule themselves – and make a virtue of doing so – find it embarrassing to rule others when others no longer wish it.

So it was for the British, or at least for an increasing number of liberal statesmen from the 1830s on. They believed in granting responsible government to colonies which seemed ready for it. Canada was the first in 1849, and later assumed the title of Dominion to mark the difference. By 1918, there were five Dominions (Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa), a white club of Empire increasingly referred to as the British Commonwealth. Other British possessions were anxious to achieve similar standing.

But, in the inter-war years, this trend towards co-operation and equal status was resisted by the conservative forces of the old fashioned British Empire. India grew rebellious. The Irish went to war, first with Britain, then with themselves. Moreover, the Dominions began fencing for complete national independence in all but name. These struggles were the birthpangs of the modern Commonwealth, a new, puzzling entity on the world stage.

by A.J.P. Taylor

Freeborn Englishmen took their rights with them when they left the mother country and established new communities overseas. This simple doctrine shaped the British Empire from the beginning, if only in a modest form. Elaborated later under the pressure of events, it ultimately transformed the British Empire into a Commonwealth of Nations – an outcome perhaps surprising to the colonists and certainly often accepted reluctantly by statesmen in London. The principle proved irresistible with the march of time, and what had been originally an association of free individuals became an association of free communities.

In the 17th Century the rights which Englishmen took with them to the New World were private rights – the right to English law and, at most, to assemblies for their local affairs. One eminent authority compared the colonial assemblies to the corporations of the City of London – bodies clearly with rights, but clearly also not sovereign. There was no conflict here so long as the Crown rather than the Parliament at Westminster was regarded as the seat of sovereignty. But in the 18th Century sovereignty passed from the Crown to the Crown in Parliament. Parliament claimed an overriding authority to legislate for the colonies just as it could for, say, chartered institutions in Great Britain. This claim led to the war of American independence. The American colonies were willing to recognize the sovereignty of the King. They were not prepared to recognize the sovereignty of the British Parliament.

The American colonies were lost. The doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty was not abandoned. It provoked little trouble in the days when Canada was the only remaining colony apart from the West Indies. In 1837 Canada, too, became restless. British statesmen reluctantly accepted the principle of responsible government, propounded by Lord Durham. The British government surrendered the conduct of domestic affairs to a colonial government responsible to the colonial legislature instead of subordinate to the Colonial Office. This concession was made first to Canada and then to the other British communities which were growing up overseas in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. The change took place without any legislative enactment. It was merely a change

In a wishful *Judy* cartoon of Christmas, 1886, John Bull invites the imperial family to taste the delights of imperial Confederation, a dish often served up by British politicians, but never appetizing to the nationally minded settler colonies.

of practice on the part of the Colonial Office, and it was meant to apply only to domestic affairs. Towards the outer world the British Empire remained a united structure, its policy determined solely by the British Cabinet and its defence provided solely by the British taxpayer.

Another concession soon followed. The colonies claimed the right to impose duties on imported goods, even if they came from Great Britain. The British government were taken aback. They protested, and acquiesced. The economic unity of the Empire was dissolved.

At the end of the 19th Century Joseph Chamberlain attempted to restore it. He proposed an imperial *Zollverein*, or customs union, which would lay down a single economic policy for the entire Empire. Underlying this was a mercantilist doctrine which had been outmoded even in the 18th Century: that Great Britain should be the manufacturing centre of the Empire, while the colonies would be content to produce foodstuffs and raw materials. The colonies were determined to promote their own industries and to defend their fiscal autonomy. They offered only imperial preference – voluntary concessions on British goods. Chamberlain's ambitious plan was laid aside.

The Colonial Conference of 1897 which Chamberlain summoned had another important outcome. It was attended only by representatives of the colonies with responsible government. A clear line was now drawn between them and the colonies, principally in West and East Africa, which did not govern themselves. Two distinct Empires came into existence almost unperceived – the self-governing colonies or Dominions as they came to be called, voluntarily co-operating with Great Britain, and the true colonies, administered in authoritarian fashion by the Colonial Office. There was of course a third Empire, as there had been in practice since the middle of the 18th Century and in law since 1858: India, ruled by a Viceroy and directed from London by the India Office, not by the Colonial Office. Strictly the King of England was Emperor only of India, a title he lost when India became independent in 1947. The British Empire was an Empire without an Emperor so far as the colonies and the self-governing Dominions were concerned.

The British government continued to

continued on p. 1882

Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary, shown here (centre) at the 1897 Colonial Conference, failed to interest Dominion delegates in his ambitious schemes for imperial economic federation.

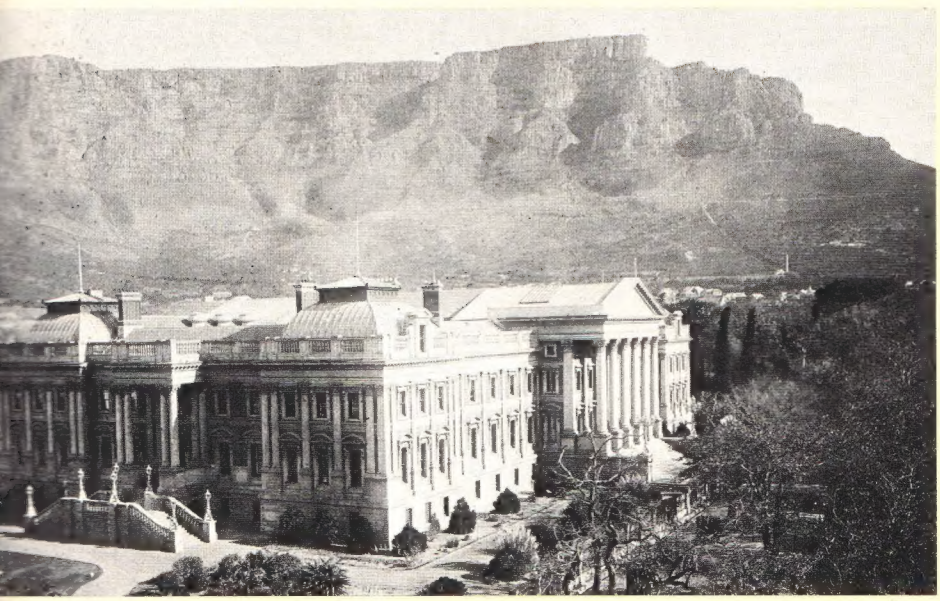
WORKSHOPS OF DEMOCRACY

In 1927 the Duke of York officially opened the last Dominion parliament house in Canberra, Australia (top right). The regal ceremony symbolized the successful transplant of parliamentary democracy, Westminster-style, to all the self-governing members of the Commonwealth – Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the newly fledged Irish Free State.

Each of the legislative buildings shown here was a symbol of British power and culture. All, except Australia's, displayed the opulence of Georgian and Victorian architecture, a style described by the English political satirist, George Orwell, as the "sheer, vulgar fatness of wealth."

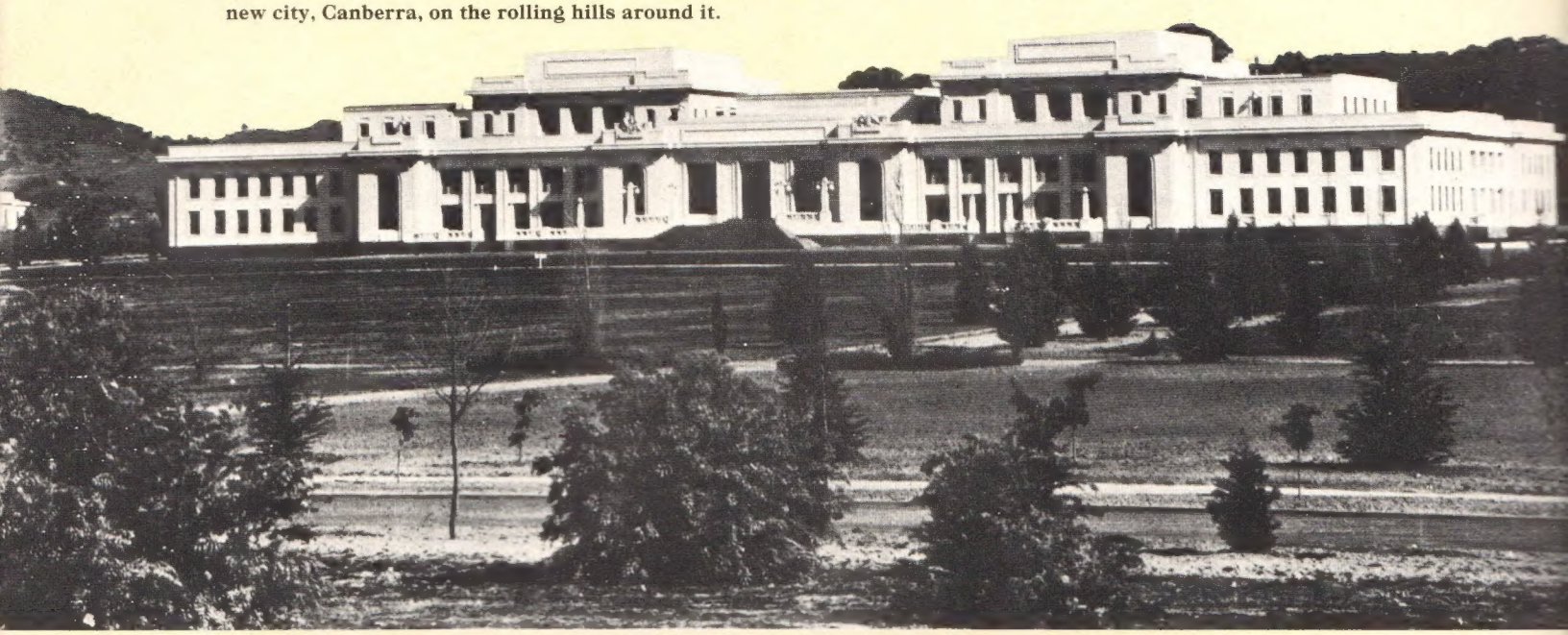
Even Australia rejected traditional grandeur more by luck than by design. When she became a federal state in 1901, her two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, both put forward their local legislative buildings as the new federal parliament. After ten years of bickering, both lost: a whole new city, Canberra, with a stark, modern parliament house, was built midway between the two. Despite its petty origins, it came to stand for a separate Australian identity, and for rising national feeling in the Empire.

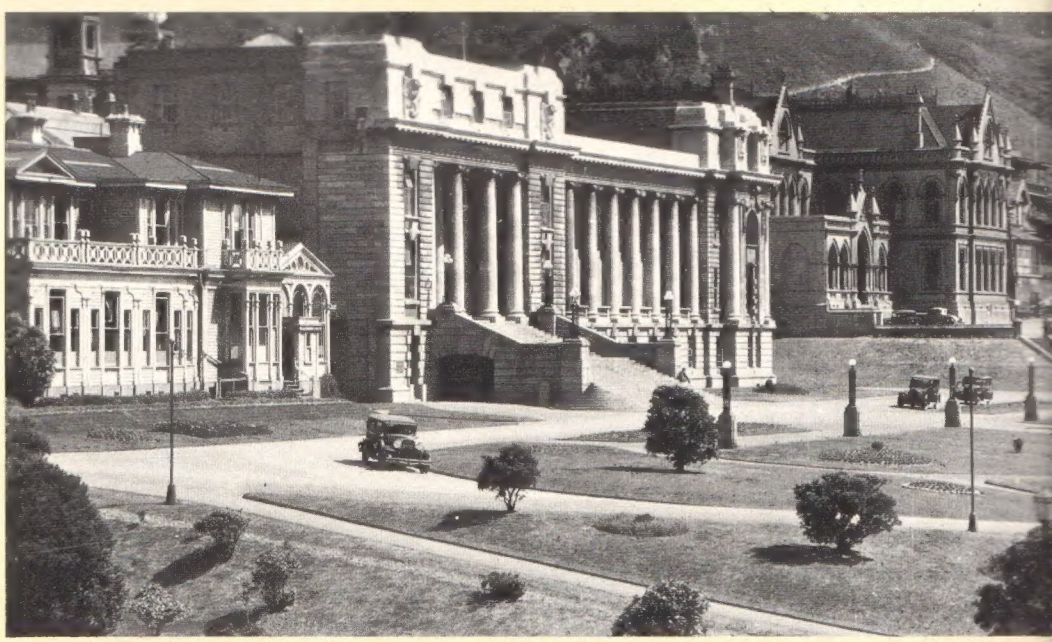
he 18th-Century Leinster House as adopted as the parliament uilding of the Irish Free State in ecember, 1921. It was formerly ie Dublin town house of the 1st Duke f Leinster, Anglo-Irish landlord and overnor-General of Ireland.



A statue of Queen Victoria (left) still stands by the side of South Africa's classical parliament building in Cape Town. Table Mountain towers in the background.

The Australian parliament building was designed by a Chicago landscape architect, W.B.Griffin. He was directed to create a new city, Canberra, on the rolling hills around it.





Parliament House, New Zealand (centre) was opened in Wellington in 1922. It and the library wing, completed in 1900, still stands (right), but Government House (left) has been demolished.

The soaring Peace Tower dominates Canada's neo-Gothic parliament buildings in Ottawa. They were built in 1916 after fire destroyed the original, similar buildings, opened in 1867 to mark Canada's emergence as a Dominion.

assert and to practise its exclusive control over foreign affairs. Occasionally a colonial representative was allowed to take part in negotiations when colonial interests were involved, as they often were between Canada and the United States. But the British diplomat exercised the formal authority. With the approach of the First World War, the British government wished to secure the co-operation and not merely the acquiescence of the Dominions. At the Imperial Conference of 1911 the representatives of the Dominions heard a disquisition on foreign policy from Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary. They were invited to contribute to the Royal Navy and to pool their military resources.

The Dominions would agree only to co-operation without any formal system. Some of them made voluntary contributions to the navy. All of them agreed to work for uniformity in naval and military equipment. But they refused to surrender any scrap of their independent authority. There was to be no imperial army or navy. The Committee of Imperial Defence might advise. It could not control. The Dominions also refused to encroach on British independence and insisted that foreign policy should remain a purely British affair.

Hence in August, 1914, the British government declared war on Germany without seeking the agreement of the Dominions or even consulting them. Each Governor-General proclaimed a state of war on the instructions of the Colonial Office. In Canada the Dominion parliament subsequently expressed its approval. The other Dominions accepted without debate the principle: "When Great Britain is at war, we are at war."

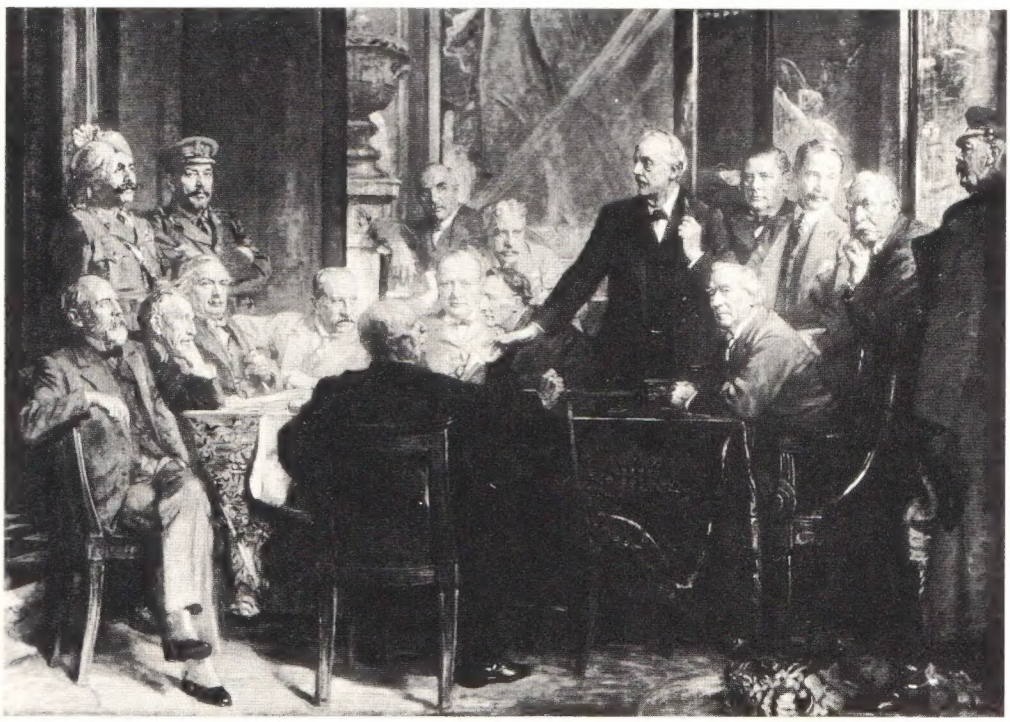
In practice they were at war as independent communities. The naval forces of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were placed under the direction of the British Admiralty for the duration, but only for the duration. The land forces of the Dominions remained independent, though usually coming under a British commander-in-chief when serving in the field. Thus the Canadian army corps in France accepted the directions of Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig. Its own commanding general was a British officer, provided by the British government at Canadian request. When this general fell out with his Canadian subordinates, Haig removed him, again at Canadian request, and appointed another British general, subsequently Viscount Byng of Vimy, who met with Canadian approval. In this transaction, the Canadian government ignored the Colonial Office and negotiated directly with Haig by means of its own military representative, Sir Max Aitken.

Australian and New Zealand forces served similarly under British command at Gallipoli and later in Mesopotamia and Palestine. Before the war ended, the Australians in France had their own commander, Sir John Monash, probably the ablest general whom the war produced. In East Africa, however, imperial forces served under General Smuts, the South African Minister of Defence.

There were other signs of Dominion independence. The emergency measures of the British Parliament were carefully drawn so that they did not apply to the Dominions, and when the British government attempted to requisition Canadian ships, Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, reminded them that, while this might be legal – as, say, the royal veto was still legal – it was not in accordance with constitutional practice. The ships were not requisitioned.

Despite this co-operation there was no co-ordination of policy. The Dominion governments sometimes complained over the conduct of operations, as Australia complained over Gallipoli. They had no share in determining what these operations should be. In 1915 Sir Robert Borden was invited to attend meetings of the British Cabinet when he visited England, but this was a gesture without apparent significance. There was a dramatic transformation when Lloyd George became Prime Minister at the end of 1916. He was convinced that the war would be lost unless the military effort of the Allies and of the Empire was brought under a single direction. With the Allies he aspired to establish a Supreme War Council. Similarly with the Dominions he aspired to establish an Imperial War Cabinet. Lloyd George had another and less avowed motive. He hoped to enlist the backing of the Allies and the Dominions against British generals, such as Haig and Sir William Robertson, whom he distrusted and yet hesitated to dismiss.

The Supreme War Council of the Allies had to wait until November, 1917 and did not become effective until the following year. The Imperial War Cabinet was easier to establish. Lloyd George had already replaced the traditional Cabinet by a war cabinet of five men, mostly



An epic painting of top British and imperial statesmen in 1914 recalls the pride and loyalty revealed by the outbreak of war – a unifying force of the fragmenting Empire.

without departmental responsibilities, who exercised supreme power at his invitation. He had only to invite the Dominion prime ministers also, and the Imperial War Cabinet was in existence. There was one startling newcomer. Hitherto co-operation had been only with the self-governing Dominions, and it was assumed that they, with their background of British traditions, were alone equipped to work an Empire by consent. Now an Indian representative appeared. With India making a greater contribution to the war effort than any single Dominion, it was impossible to ignore her.

It is true that the Indian representative was merely the Secretary of State for India – a British Cabinet minister. But the Imperial War Cabinet drew the moral. The admission of India was an advance payment on account, and the Imperial War Cabinet anticipated the time when India, too, would achieve responsible government. Here was the decisive acknowledgement, however delayed in application, that the Commonwealth would not ultimately be limited to people of British stock.

The Imperial War Cabinet met in March, 1917. All the Dominion prime ministers attended with the exception of Botha, Prime Minister of South Africa, who was represented by General Smuts. Lloyd George claimed that an imperial executive had come into existence. The Dominions were not caught so easily. Sir Robert Borden, the Canadian Prime Minister, was the determined protagonist of Canadian independence. He defended this independence against the United States; he defended it equally against the imperial government. Smuts seconded him. For, though the Boers had lost the Anglo-Boer war, Smuts was determined that they should secure virtual independence all the same.

Borden insisted that the essence of cabinet government was responsible government. If Lloyd George chose to bring in Dominion prime ministers as additional members, that was his affair; but these prime ministers were responsible solely to their own parliaments – as the British War Cabinet was responsible to the Parliament at Westminster – and nothing the Imperial War Cabinet decided could be allowed to infringe this responsibility. In Borden's view, the Imperial War Cabinet was a group of friends meeting for discussion, not an executive. Far from strengthening the authority of London over the Empire, the Imperial War Cabinet asserted the authority of the Dominions over London, or so it seemed. For the Dominions claimed "an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations" and demanded effective arrangements for continuous consultation on all important matters. London, not the Dominions, forfeited autonomy.

At the time the dispute did not come into the open. All were agreed that the war must be won, and the Dominion prime ministers were ready to second Lloyd George in winning it – though not to the extent of backing him against British generals. When the Imperial War Cabinet dispersed, Smuts stayed behind and joined the British War Cabinet. This did not imply any British authority over South African affairs. On the contrary a South African minister, without a seat in the British Parliament, was interfering in British affairs – conciliating the trade unions, inaugurating an independent air force, and conducting abortive peace negotiations with Austria-Hungary, an enemy power.

The Dominions certainly expected to be consulted before hostilities were concluded. No such consultation took place. Lloyd George claimed that there was no time, though he managed to consult Greece and Portugal. The Dominions were committed, whether they liked it or not, to the armistice and to the acceptance, with certain reservations, of President Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis of the peace treaty. All the more therefore did they insist on independent representation at the peace conference. The British War Cabinet had planned a British Empire delegation of five – four members of the British War Cabinet and one Dominion prime minister. The Dominions answered that they had made greater sacrifices than any but the major powers and greater than the United States. The result was a curious compromise which must have baffled foreigners. The British Empire delegation survived, but in addition Australia, Canada, India and South Africa received two delegates apiece, and New Zealand one.

This would have given the British Empire 14 votes if the peace conference had ever decided anything by voting. In the outcome it did not. Lloyd George, Clemenceau and President Wilson decided every important question at private meetings, and the others powers merely acquiesced. Even so, the Dominions played some part. Lloyd George invoked the entire British Empire delegation when he fought to make the peace terms less harsh. Both Smuts and Borden became chairmen of the committees which settled minor questions, and Smuts acted as delegate of the Big Three in their abortive negotiations with Bolshevik Hungary. Moreover, the Dominions secured mandates in their own names and became independent members of the League of Nations with the right to be chosen as members of the League Council.

The British Empire thus came out of the First World War with its greatness apparently much enhanced. It had been the chief of the victorious powers. A new Empire, disguised as mandates, came into existence, stretching from Egypt to the confines of India and directed by the Foreign, not the Colonial, Office. Against this, the Dominions had acquired a degree of independence and international recognition which would have been inconceivable before 1914. There were further sources of weakness. India had been promised responsible government in some remote future. But when the Congress Party, led by Gandhi, demanded fulfilment of this promise, the imperial government answered with repression, and the massacre at Amritsar in 1919 set an indelible river of blood between the Indian people and their rulers.

The Dominions did not care much about India. They were deeply involved over Ireland. Irishmen were active in Australian politics; the Irish were an important element of the Canadian population; and the Boers of South Africa saw a close parallel between the position of the Irish and their own. Yet in the immediate postwar years the British government was resisting the Irish claim to independence by violent means. At the end of the war the Irish set up their own parliament and proclaimed a republic. The British, who were still ruling Ireland, relied on military force and, when this proved inadequate, brought in irregulars, who instituted rule by terror. Civil war raged in Ireland.

Lloyd George and his government insisted that Ireland was a purely domestic question. Though willing to grant Irish Home Rule, this must be within the

LE ROY
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United Kingdom. The Dominions could not see why the position which had been granted to them could not be granted to Ireland also. At bottom they regarded Ireland as a distinct nation like themselves, not as an integral part of the United Kingdom.

By 1921 Irish affairs had reached deadlock. The Irish could not expel the British; the British could not subdue the Irish. An imperial conference was again meeting in London. Smuts, now Prime Minister of South Africa, attended and became the agent for conciliation in Ireland. Having himself accepted Dominion status for South Africa instead of continuing to fight a war of independence, he was the tame elephant who would lure the wild Irish elephants into the Commonwealth corral. Smuts assured de Valera, President of the Irish Republic, that Dominion status was actually preferable to independence; for, while it gave the Dominions complete control over their own affairs, it compelled the imperial government to serve Dominion interests and thus gave the Dominions all the advantages, without the burdens, of greatness. De Valera was not convinced, but he agreed to negotiate. He left the actual negotiations to other Irish leaders, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, and they were won over by the mixture of conciliation and threats which Lloyd George offered.

In December, 1921, a treaty ended the conflict between Great Britain and the Irish rebels. Twenty-six counties of Ireland became the Irish Free State. There was still an oath of loyalty to the King; the British kept control of three Irish ports. Otherwise the Irish Free State received Dominion status in the same measure as Canada. Underlying this was a basic difference. Canada, having received virtual independence, now wished to preserve the Commonwealth. The Irish had had Dominion status forced on them, and many still meant to shake it off.

There was, however, a difference of tactics. The majority even of Irish republicans accepted the treaty and hoped to remove its restrictions by constitutional means. A minority resumed the armed struggle, and there was a new civil war – this time between Irishmen. The Free State won, but it was a temporary victory, and for the Commonwealth an unfortunate one. For, by insisting that Ireland should remain a Dominion, the British introduced into the Commonwealth a member whose only interest was to weaken such ties as still existed.

At the time it seemed that the Commonwealth was actually growing stronger. When the Imperial Conference met in 1921, Lloyd George announced that an imperial cabinet had come into existence. The Dominion prime ministers were less enthusiastic. Smuts said that the meeting was "no Cabinet. . . . It had no executive functions . . . merely a consultative body," and Meighen, who had succeeded Borden in Canada, added: "this is a conference, not an executive." The result, as often happened with Lloyd George, was equivocal. It was agreed that the imperial cabinet should meet again. In fact it never did. It was also agreed that there should be single foreign policy conducted by the British government, but that the means of communication and discussion with the Dominions should be improved. No improvement was made, and the Dominions therefore quietly forgot their acceptance of a single foreign policy.

The only practical outcome of the meeting was a victory for the Dominions. The United States had proposed a conference at Washington to discuss naval limitation and the Far East. As a preliminary, the British government wished to renew their alliance with Japan. Canada objected that this would offend the U.S., and the other Dominions agreed. The British government reluctantly abandoned the Japanese alliance.

The Washington Conference itself, which met during the winter of 1921, was at first apparently a setback for the Dominions, for they did not receive independent representation as they had done at Paris. But in fact they directed the policy which was put forward by the British delegates. Moreover, it was essential that they should ratify the agreement on naval limitation, which embraced all the naval forces of the Empire. Thus, as things turned out, Lloyd George's boasts of a united Empire proved empty. Contemporaries assumed that imperial sentiment was powerful and Dominion nationalism weak. The exact opposite was true.

The power of Dominion nationalism was demonstrated once and for all in the Chanak crisis of September, 1922 – a crisis which ended all hopes of a united British Empire directed by a single authority. The treaty of Sèvres with the Sultan of Turkey had not brought peace in the Near East. The new nationalist government of Turkey, led by Kemal Pasha, rejected the treaty. Lloyd George backed the Greek occupation of part of Asia Minor. The British held Constantinople and the Straits. Lloyd George's enthusiasm for the Greeks was not shared by his colleagues. But when Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, protested against it, he was forced to resign – evidence that India was not allowed a voice of her own despite the talk of future Dominion status. In these circumstances it was not surprising that Lloyd George failed to communicate his Near Eastern policy to the Dominions.

In September, 1922, Kemal's army triumphed. The Greeks were driven from Asia Minor. The Turks advanced to the Straits and threatened Chanak, the main British outpost on the Asiatic shore. In theory Great Britain was acting on behalf of the Allies. In fact France and Italy had already settled with Kemal. Great Britain stood alone.

On September 15, Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, addressed an "inquiry" to the Dominions whether they would send troops to the Straits. No such "inquiry" had ever been made before, not even at the outbreak of the First World War. To make matters worse, Churchill revealed the inquiry to the press, and Mackenzie King, the new Prime Minister of Canada, actually read the story in his Sunday newspapers before he received the official message.

New Zealand at once agreed to send a contingent. So did Australia, though Hughes, the Prime Minister, protested against the communication to the press. Smuts characteristically did not reply at all until the crisis was over. Mackenzie King's answer was the decisive one. He protested that Canada had been kept completely in the dark about Great Britain's policy. He asserted that the Canadian parliament must be consulted, and he declined to act until it had been.

A few weeks later the Turks agreed to an armistice, and the crisis was over. It left an indelible mark. All the Dominions, and particularly Canada, were indignant at having been kept in the dark. They

Dwarfed by the great arches of the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, the numerous delegates (standing at the back) from Canada, Australia, South Africa and India watch the signing of the peace treaty in June, 1919. For the first time, they were present in their own right upon the glittering stage of international relations.

1921: Splitting the Emerald Isle

In the early hours of December 6, 1921, Britain signed a treaty with delegates from southern Ireland which ended two years of the most fratricidal guerrilla war ever fought in the Empire. It was designed to keep the south within the Empire as a Dominion called the Irish Free State. To do so, it greatly increased the self-governing powers of the south, which, like the north, had been given separate local government by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. But at the same time, it continued to regard Ireland in theory as one country.

The treaty did no more than paper over the cracks. The British negotiators could discover no way of ending Ireland's fundamental division into two irreconcilably opposed camps, one in the south, predominantly Catholic and intent on setting up an independent republic, the other in the north, mainly Protestant and loyal to the Crown.

This division had been inherent in Ireland from the day the first Protestant settlers arrived from Britain in the early 17th Century and laid the foundations of a separate, northern Irish nation in Ulster. These loyalist Protestants, ever fearful of the native population they displaced, had never been willing to join an Irish republic dominated by "papist rebels." But the issue only came to a head when the southerners attempted to set up a republic with armed force during the course of and immediately after the First World War.

The first revolutionary attempt, on Easter Monday, 1916, had been quickly suppressed by Britain. The second proved more serious. Led by the most extreme republicans in Sinn Fein ("Ourselves Alone"), it relied for military success on Sinn Fein's military wing, the Irish Volunteer Force, forerunner of the I.R.A. This citizen army, commanded by Michael Collins, a veteran of 1916, and armed with stolen or clandestinely bought rifles, launched a guerrilla war against the Royal Irish Constabulary in January, 1919.

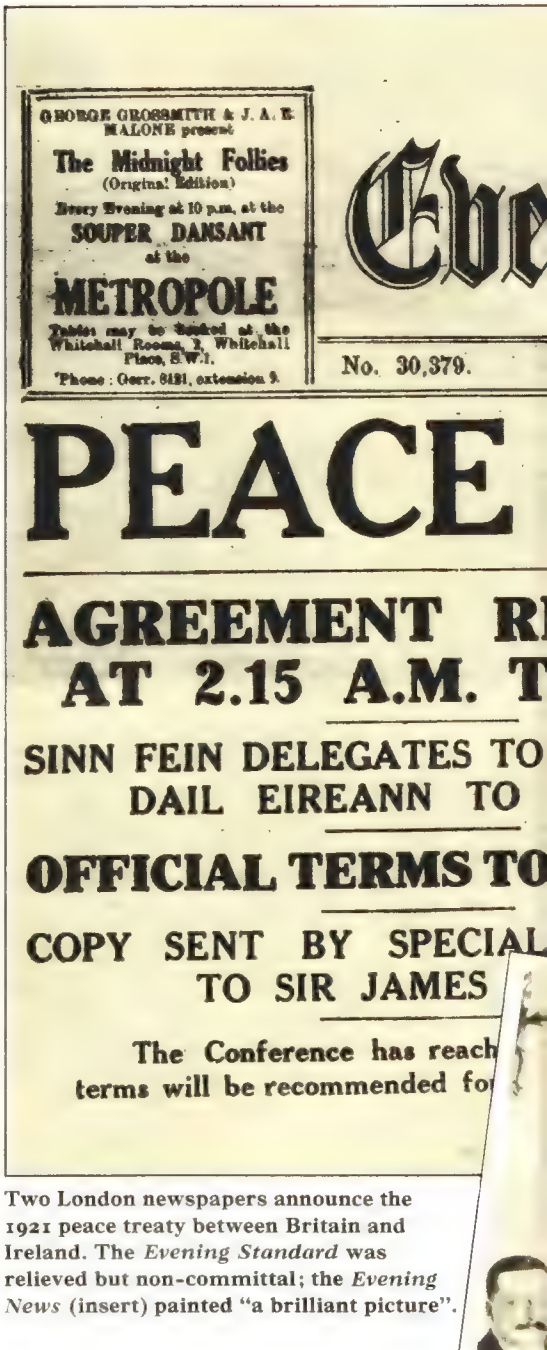
Britain reacted by adding two paramilitary wings to the Constabulary: the "Black and Tans," who wore khaki with black police caps and belts, and the Auxiliary Division, similarly dressed and known as the "Auxis." This was a fatal step. Revolutionary outrages and the undisciplined reprisals by these Crown irregulars fed upon each other and plunged Ireland into anarchy.

Moderate men everywhere were shocked, and in Britain voices from the Left and the Churches broke into unison, demanding any settlement to end the war. In July, 1921, a truce was declared and five long months of peace negotiations began.

Southern Ireland demanded a republic of all Ireland, totally free of both monarchy and Empire. With equal truculence, Ulster demanded to stay British. But Lloyd George, who headed the coalition government of Liberals and Tories, was determined both to bring peace and satisfy die-hard opinion by keeping Ireland in the Empire.

His offer was Dominion status for all Ireland. The North would retain the local government powers granted to her in 1920, but would exercise them under the rule of Dublin. Ulster refused and Lloyd George then held out the possibility of eventual Irish unification through a commission to redraw boundaries between North and South. By a mixture of threats and persuasion, he obtained the agreement of the southern delegates. At 2.15 a.m. on December 6 the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed.

"Peace for Ireland," exclaimed the newspapers later that day. "Vision of a free and happy Ireland." It was an illusion. Ireland was united in name; in effect, she was partitioned into two separate, self-governing states. Britain had stopped the fighting and saved the prestige of the Empire for the time being. For the future, she had stored up a conflict which would still torment her 50 years later when Empire remained no more than a memory.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PEACE

AGREEMENT R
AT 2.15 A.M. T

SINN FEIN DELEGATES TO
DAIL EIREANN TO

OFFICIAL TERMS TO

COPY SENT BY SPECIAL
TO SIR JAMES

The Conference has reach
terms will be recommended fo

Two London newspapers announce the 1921 peace treaty between Britain and Ireland. The *Evening Standard* was relieved but non-committal; the *Evening News* (insert) painted "a brilliant picture".

Southern Irish treaty-makers in London include (seated) Arthur Griffith (left) and Michael Collins (centre), who during the war years of 1919–21 had £10,000 on his head.

EARLY SPECIAL

ing Standard

NDON, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1921. ONE PENNY.

GO TO THE
PALACE HOTEL
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA.
£5 : 5 : 0
£3 : 3 : 0
£2 : 5 : 0

FOR IRELAND

ACHED
-DAY.
ECOMMEND
CCEPT.
MORROW
MESSENGER

VISION OF A FREE AND HAPPY IRELAND.

THE KING'S SPEECH IN CROWDED HOUSE OF LORDS.

A BRILLIANT PICTURE.

00,000 CUT
PENDITURE.

ON TRYING TO
ENDS MEET.

AR'S REVENUE.

S TREATED AS
NDFALLS."

were no longer willing to accept a British foreign policy blindfold, and they faced, however reluctantly, a situation where Great Britain would be at war while some at any rate of the Dominions held aloof. Imperial unity was shattered.

This became clear in the course of the following years. In Great Britain the Conservatives revolted against Lloyd George after the Chanak crisis, and he fell from power. Bonar Law, his successor, was determined to follow a more cautious policy and made no new demands on the Dominions. Instead he ignored them. The Dominions were not invited to send representatives to the conference at Lausanne which made peace with Turkey. As a result, Great Britain ratified the treaty of Lausanne in the name of the British Empire, but Canada and the Irish Free State refused to accept any responsibility for it.

Yet another Imperial Conference met in 1923. The British government may have hoped to salvage something from the wreck of Chanak. The Dominions, however, were determined that such a situation should not be repeated. No attempt was made to provide the consultation which had been promised in 1921 and then so conspicuously neglected. No suggestion was made for regular meetings in the future. The Imperial Cabinet was not merely buried; it was implied that no such idea had ever existed. Moreover, the Dominions insisted that, just as Great Britain could make international agreements without consulting them, they could make international agreements without consulting Great Britain. In this way they took a further step towards complete independence in international relations. The Dominions took one initiative. They expressed approval of imperial preference, by which they meant that Great Britain should tax foodstuffs imported from non-Empire countries in exchange for a promise by the Dominions not to increase their taxes on British manufactured goods while raising them against everyone else. This was not an attractive bargain for Great Britain. It carried with it the dreaded shadow of "stomach taxes," which the British electorate had repeatedly rejected, and the British government ignored the offer.

CIVIL WAR IN IRELAND

The 1921 Anglo-Irish treaty aimed to bring peace to Ireland by conferring Dominion status and allowing the Free State and Northern Ireland to govern themselves separately. Instead it added a new dimension of violence.

The treaty was accepted by the majority of Sinn Fein (the Irish republican party) and most war-weary southern Irish as a first step towards republican status. But the die-hard Sinn Feiners were appalled. Their dream of an immediate, united republic of all Ireland – independent of Crown and Empire – was shattered. For them there was only one answer: to renew the struggle.

At the head of the die-hards was Eamon de Valera, ousted as President of the party for his point-blank refusal to accept the treaty terms.

In his place and now directly opposed to him was Michael Collins, former military leader against the British, but also negotiator of the treaty. It was he who, in January, 1922, formed a provisional government in the new Irish Free State. The lines were drawn for civil war in the south.

Eamon de Valera led the die-hard Irish republicans in refusing to accept the treaty of 1921. His passionate obduracy threw southern Ireland into civil war.

Armed with rifles but wearing civvies, Free State guards stand watch in Dublin in 1922.

Crowds cheer Michael Collins as he enters Dublin Castle – former palace of the British Viceroys – to take possession of it for the new Irish Free State in January, 1922.

Michael Collins, favouring moderation, replaced de Valera as Sinn Fein President.

Crowds pack College Green, Dublin, to hear Collins (left) proclaim the Irish Free State.

The Shattering of a Fragile Peace

In April, 1922, the split between southern Irish republicans became a military confrontation. Sinn Fein, the party which had spearheaded the independence movement, was already divided over the treaty terms. But de Valera, who led the small, anti-treaty faction, was determined to force his vision of an immediate republic on his more conservative countrymen.

He won the support of an anti-treaty group in the I.R.A. and, on the night of April 13, 1922, armed men occupied and set up a rebel headquarters in the Four Courts, the home of the Irish judiciary in Dublin. Soon afterwards, Irregulars, as the anti-treaty faction of the I.R.A. became known, infiltrated rural areas, occupying the scores of fortified posts which had been evacuated by British troops at the end of the 1919–21 war. From these positions they robbed post offices, cut off telephone, cable and rail services, and murdered anyone they believed to support the 1921 treaty. Free State forces as yet made no large-scale response.

There was still a chance of compromise. On May 20, Collins and de Valera made a last effort to unify their opposing factions. In June there was to be an election to ratify Collins's provisional government. In preparation for this, the two men concluded a pact by which pro- and anti-treaty factions would form a coalition government. Peace for Ireland seemed once again a possibility.

The flag is lowered (above) and bread and bedding are removed (below) as the minority, anti-treaty faction of the I.R.A. evacuates a stronghold, the Masonic Hail, in Dublin in May, 1922. Veiled pressure from the Free State Army kept them on the move.

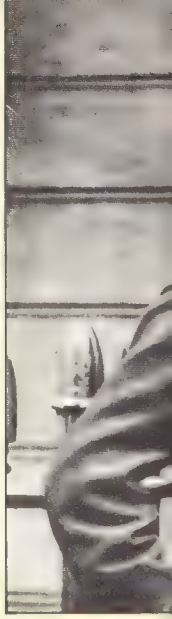
The Free State Army prays for peace in May, 1922. Many of their former comrades had already increased the likelihood of civil war by defecting to the anti-treaty I.R.A. The losses had to be made good by recruitment of Irish soldiers from the British and American armies.

The Contagion of Violence

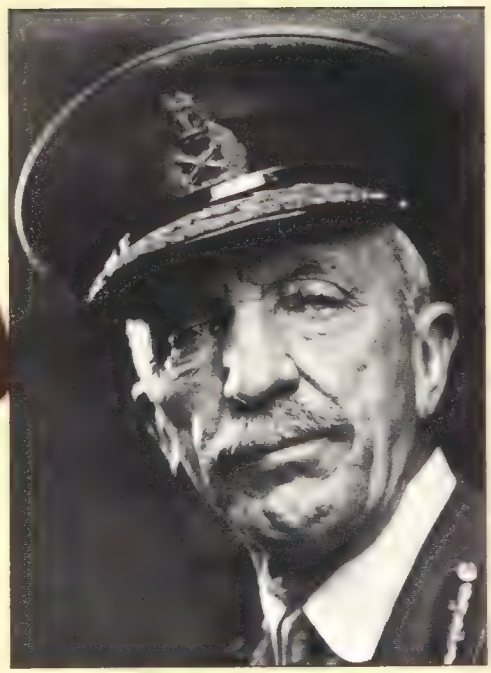
June, 1922, was a month of extreme anxiety for Michael Collins, leader of the provisional government of the Irish Free State. He snatched an election victory on June 16, but only after repudiating his pact with Eamon de Valera's splinter group.

Meanwhile, relations between the Free State and Northern Ireland took a disastrous turn. Collins's Northern counterpart, Premier Sir James Craig, had appointed as his military adviser Sir Henry Wilson, former British Chief of General Staff and an arch enemy of Irish republicanism. Although Wilson personally deplored mob violence, he was unable to do anything about the mounting tempo of sectarian conflict. Between December, 1921, and mid-June, 1922, 264 Northern Irish were shot or killed in explosions, two-thirds of them Roman Catholics. As a result, Catholic refugees streamed south in their thousands.

This brutal treatment led to a dramatic retaliation. On June 22, Sir Henry Wilson was shot dead outside his London home. The assassination was carried out by two I.R.A. gunmen who believed they were acting with Collins's approval. Both were captured almost immediately, sent for trial, and later convicted and executed. Ironically, the British blamed the I.R.A. Irregulars and instructed Collins to move in on their "nest" in the Four Courts, Dublin. As Collins knew, this would lead to all-out civil war.



A policeman (above left) stands guard outside the bullet-holed door of Sir Henry Wilson's London home while (above) one of the alleged assassins, Reginald Dunne, is led away.



Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, called "Ugly" by his troops in the First World War, was military adviser to the Northern Ireland Government when he was shot in 1922.

A family of Roman Catholic refugees from Belfast cluster around their meagre possessions on arrival in strife-torn Dublin. By mid-June, 1922, some 23,000 Catholics had fled from the Protestant terror in Northern Ireland.

Brother Against Brother

On June 28, 1922, British field guns lent to Collins's Free State Army by the British opened fire on the Irregulars in the Four Courts, Dublin. After two days, they surrendered. Then Free State troops, using 10,000 rifles sent by the British, wiped out other Irregular units in Dublin in a ruthless, eight-day battle. Sixty people died, many of them Collins's colleagues from the 1919–21 war.

The victory in Dublin was, in Winston Churchill's optimistic view, "the salute which celebrated the foundation of the Irish Free State." As it happened, the Irregulars, far from surrendering, turned from guerrilla to conventional warfare. After their defeat in Dublin, they retreated south-west and prepared for a fight to the finish. Collins, having made his decision, pursued them with cold-blooded determination. When an old and close friend, Harry Boland, was killed on the rebel side, Collins suppressed all emotion, commenting merely, "My condemnation is for all those who would put themselves up as paragons of Irish Nationality and all the others as being not worthy of concern."

Back in his old role of military commander, he exploited propaganda to strengthen popular support and, late in July, sent units of the Free State Army behind the rebel line by sea – the first nail in the coffin of the Irregulars.

In propaganda photographs, both taken in Dublin in July, 1922, Irish Free State Army soldiers flush out anti-treaty rebels (above), while Army snipers (below) reload and prepare to fire during rebel attacks.

Irish Free State Army soldiers stop a taxi at a barbed-wire check point in southern Ireland in July, 1922.

A Free State Army soldier takes aim at the Hamman Hotel, Dublin, which became the Irregulars' headquarters after the fall of the Four Courts on June 28, 1922.

A Sullen Coexistence

By August, 1922, the Free Staters were close to victory over the Irregulars. On the 10th, they took Cork, the last major town in rebel hands. Defeated in regular warfare, the rebels returned to guerrilla war in rural areas as a means of fighting a rearguard action.

The last six months were the most bitter. Just when the military balance was turning in favour of the government, a political calamity occurred which led to a vicious circle of strike and counter-strike. On August 12, Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein and an architect of the Free State, died suddenly. Ten days later, Michael Collins too was dead, killed in a gun-battle near Macroom in his home county, Cork. Weakened by the loss of its two principal leaders, the government took emergency powers. Possession of a revolver was made punishable by death.

To this the Irregulars replied with a decree ordering all members of the Free State government or parliament to be shot on sight. The first killing came in November. In retaliation, the government executed eight captured members of the Irregular I.R.A. By May, 1923, there had been 77 executions.

In the face of such slaughter, de Valera admitted military defeat; but he ordered political opposition to continue and so prolonged the struggle right through the summer. By July, 11,000 southern Irishmen had been interned and on August 15, de Valera himself was arrested to be held without trial for a year.

Quiet returned to Ireland. But nothing had been solved. On December 7, 1922, the Northern Ireland government had exercised its option under the 1921 treaty to rejoin the United Kingdom. A united Irish republic was now further away than ever. Yet, despite the slaughter of the civil war, the republican dream was still being dreamed in the south. The quiet was one of sullen coexistence, not that of a lasting peace.

Irish Free State soldiers bear the coffin of one of their comrades in a mass funeral in Dublin in August, 1922 – the last month of regular civil war fighting.

A resolute crowd outside Mountjoy prison, Dublin, in October, 1923, demonstrates its support for anti-treaty internees on hunger strike and declares its religious faith in a united, republican Ireland.

HUNGER STRIKE
Freedom or the Grave
PRAY
FOR GOD
FREEDOM OF IRELAND
PRAY
PRAY

II. Death Knell of the Old Empire

Imperial relations were now thoroughly in a muddle. It was clear that the Dominions were no longer prepared to accept rule from London even in international affairs. Yet no one had thought of an alternative. Indeed, the British government went on behaving in the old fashion, apparently hoping that the Dominions would not notice. Thus the Labour government of 1924 recognized Soviet Russia without warning the Dominions and then, despite Dominion protests, went on to arrange an international conference on German reparations without providing for Dominion representation. Once more the Dominions protested. Once more the British government explained that it had forgotten the claim of the Dominions to independent representation until too late.

Ultimately the British government drew the moral, though in a way even more destructive of imperial unity. In 1925 Great Britain took the lead in promoting the conciliation of Germany, and the Treaty of Locarno included a guarantee by Great Britain and Italy of the Franco-German frontier. The Dominions were not invited to the conference which preceded the treaty. They were not even told what was going on until the conference was concluded. Then they received surprising news. The British delegates had agreed that the guarantee should be given solely by Great Britain and that the Dominions were not involved. Where previously the Dominions had asserted their independence of London, London now apparently asserted its independence of the Dominions. Here certainly was the end of Empire. If the terms of Locarno really meant what they said, the British government was not merely admitting that the Dominions might remain neutral in a future war. It was assuming that this would happen.

The Dominions could not believe it. They thought that there must be some subtle British trap. Some of the Dominions had other reasons for discontent. Both South Africa and the Irish Free State could not change their constitutions without the permission of the British Parliament, and both wished to do so. The Canadian grievance was even stronger. Viscount Byng, the Governor-General, refused a dissolution to Mackenzie King, the Liberal, and then granted one to Meighen, the Conservative. King and his Liberals won the subsequent general election, largely on the cry that the imperial government was interfering in Canadian affairs. This was untrue. Byng acted, however mistakenly, as a constitutional ruler, and entirely without advice from London. But the impression remained, and King, too, came to London, determined to put an end to the supposed powers of the imperial government.

The Dominions expected a conflict. No conflict took place. The British government had long abandoned any idea of imposing its authority on the Dominions. British statesmen, themselves bewildered, were anxious to remove Dominion grievances and make the situation clear. The elderly Balfour produced a miraculous formula. It defined the members of the Commonwealth as autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Of course this definition had been true in practice for a long time, but neither the Dominions nor what used to be called the imperial government had realized it. Balfour, by putting it on paper, removed the corpse of the Empire and substituted a living Commonwealth.

In the course of the next few years there was much tidying up of the constitutional system in order to confirm the definition of 1926. The governor-general of a Dominion ceased to be the nominee and agent of the imperial government and became a constitutional figurehead. Relations between London and the Dominions were now conducted by high commissioners who were ambassadors under another name. The Dominions got complete freedom of action in international affairs, negotiating with foreign countries and concluding treaties almost as though the Commonwealth did not exist. In 1931, by the Statute of Westminster, the British Parliament formally renounced its shadowy right to legislate for the Dominions and acknowledged their right to change their constitutions, regardless of former imperial restrictions.

What remained of the Commonwealth? In appearance almost nothing except for the common allegiance to the Crown, and even that was not much more than a form of words. George V never visited any of his Dominions after he became King, and each governor-general, though theoretically the King's deputy, became increasingly distant particularly when many of them were drawn from their own Dominion. The Commonwealth seemed to be a slightly more intimate League of Nations, the members of which were on friendly terms and at any rate extremely unlikely to go to war with each other.

Under the surface there was still a good deal more to the Commonwealth than legalistic phrases. It was still unmistakably British. All the Dominions had a political and legal system derived from Great Britain's, and all had the ideas of civil liberty which went along with these ideas. In all of them English was still the prevailing language. All of them had a similar social system to the British, except for the lack of an aristocracy. They were all at any rate nominally Christian and predominantly Protestant. An Englishman would feel more at home in a Dominion than anywhere else, and a man from any Dominion would feel more at home in Great Britain than any other foreign country.

This underlying unity of sentiment began to change in the years which followed the Statute of Westminster. In the earlier period of conflict the Dominions had asserted their independent position and even displayed a Dominion nationality. But this nationality had been a new expression of the British character. Now nationality in the older sense raised its head. This was clearest in the case of Ireland.

The Irish no longer accepted the idea of a common British nationality, whatever they may have done in the past. Coached by de Valera who held power throughout the 1930s, the Irish firmly regarded Great Britain as a foreign country. De

Valera used the new freedom bestowed by the Statute of Westminster to get rid of the Anglo-Irish treaty, change the constitution, and transform the Free State into Eire – a virtually independent country. The governor-general disappeared. The oath of loyalty to the King disappeared, and in 1936 de Valera used the opportunity of Edward VIII's abdication crisis to eliminate all mention of the British Crown except as an anonymous "organ" for international relations. In an effort to appease de Valera, the British government surrendered control of the three Irish ports, which it had kept under the terms of the treaty.

Ireland had the legal appearance of a foreign country. Yet appearances were not everything. There was still a common currency – a link Great Britain possessed with no other Dominion. Irishmen still enjoyed all the rights of British citizenship without the obligations. They could, for instance, vote in British elections, though they were not liable to military service in time of war. In a curious way, the Irish turned out to be British after all.

There were national conflicts elsewhere. The French of Quebec were increasingly vocal against British superiority, and there was a persistent attempt to reduce the British character of Canada. But since the French were equally distrustful of American predominance they did not turn openly against the Commonwealth. The national question in Canada remained a domestic affair. It was otherwise in South Africa where the Boers worked relentlessly to establish the superiority which they had failed to win in the Anglo-Boer war. The British in South Africa were transformed into a tolerated minority and were compelled to go along with the Boers. South Africa lost much of its British character, particularly when it adopted the Boer principle of treating the coloured inhabitants as an inferior race. South Africa's separation from the Commonwealth became only a matter of time.

The British Empire and the Commonwealth after it were legal structures. They were also economic organizations, at first for the advantage of Great Britain, later as a partnership for common benefit. Canada could stand on her own feet, drawing the capital for her economic advance largely from her own resources. Australia and New Zealand were financed from London on favourable terms and derived much of their prosperity from supplying Great Britain with foodstuffs and raw materials. The association could grow no closer as long as Great Britain stuck to Free Trade. But suppose Great Britain abandoned Free Trade and turned the Commonwealth into a closed economic area? Then the Commonwealth might become a reality once more.

This was the purpose of the Empire Crusade which Lord Beaverbrook launched in 1930. Its slogan was Empire Free Trade. Great Britain was to impose duties on foreign foodstuffs for the benefit of the Dominions, and they would repay her by opening their doors to her manufacturers. This programme was probably out of date even when Joseph Chamberlain had first proposed it. It certainly ran against insuperable obstacles in 1930. The British people were still against stomach taxes, or so it was alleged. The Dominions were unwilling to endanger the development of their own industries, nor indeed was Great Britain at all capable of becoming the workshop of the Dominions.

Yet the Empire Crusade, though unsuccessful, left its mark. The Dominions were quite willing to accept favourable terms for the import of their foodstuffs into Great Britain and became the keener when the Great Depression of 1929–33 struck hardest against the primary producers. The Imperial Conference of 1930 expressed a strong desire for imperial preference, though the British government did not respond. But in 1931 the Depression struck Great Britain also, and under this stimulus the British government did respond.

Great Britain was forced by the Great Depression to abandon the gold standard, and in a way this strengthened the Commonwealth. For Australia, New Zealand and Ireland also joined the sterling area. Moreover, the economic crisis in Great Britain destroyed her traditional allegiance to Free Trade.

The ornate cover of a book, published in Vancouver to celebrate 50 years of Canadian confederation, pays tribute to the pioneers who built a new life and founded a proud nation.

IT'S NOT CRICKET

In 1933, England and Australia were more than ordinarily convulsed by a matter traditionally associated with British phlegm: cricket. For the test series of that year saw the ball turned into a bullet by "bodyline" bowling. The term was coined by the Australian press to describe an eminently successful form of English bowling practised especially by Harold Larwood, who terrorized batsmen with fast balls aimed at their bodies and heads. Australia's captain Bill Woodfull echoed his countrymen's outrage in the words: "This isn't cricket, this is war!" For a time it seemed that sport, far from uniting the Commonwealth, was about to tear it apart.

Harold Larwood, the Nottingham-born fast bowler, was nick-named "The Nottingham Express."

The British team for the 1932–33 tour of Australia (above) was led by Douglas Jardine (seated, centre), a former Oxford Blue. As his main weapon he decided to use Harold Larwood (top, third from right), a former coal-miner. In 1934, Larwood was asked to apologize to the M.C.C. for the bodyline tactics he had employed at his captain's request. He later emigrated to Australia.

Even Donald Bradman, perhaps the greatest batsman ever for consistent high scoring, failed to master Larwood's cannonballs. Bradman, who averaged an unequalled 99·94 in his 80 test innings, helped Australia win the Ashes each year – bar 1933 – from 1930 until he retired in 1948.

Larwood completes his run-up, which was carefully paced to give maximum speed without "burning" him out over long periods.

Jack Fingleton models the "armour" adopted by many Australian batsmen as protection against bodyline bowling. (On the field of play, the extra padding was worn under their clothing.)

A Pitched Battle

The crease became a battle line in the third of the five tests held in Adelaide in January, 1933. Australia, with her "boy wonder" batsman, Don Bradman, had held the Ashes since 1930. Now, England's captain, Douglas Jardine, used Harold Larwood to snatch them away.

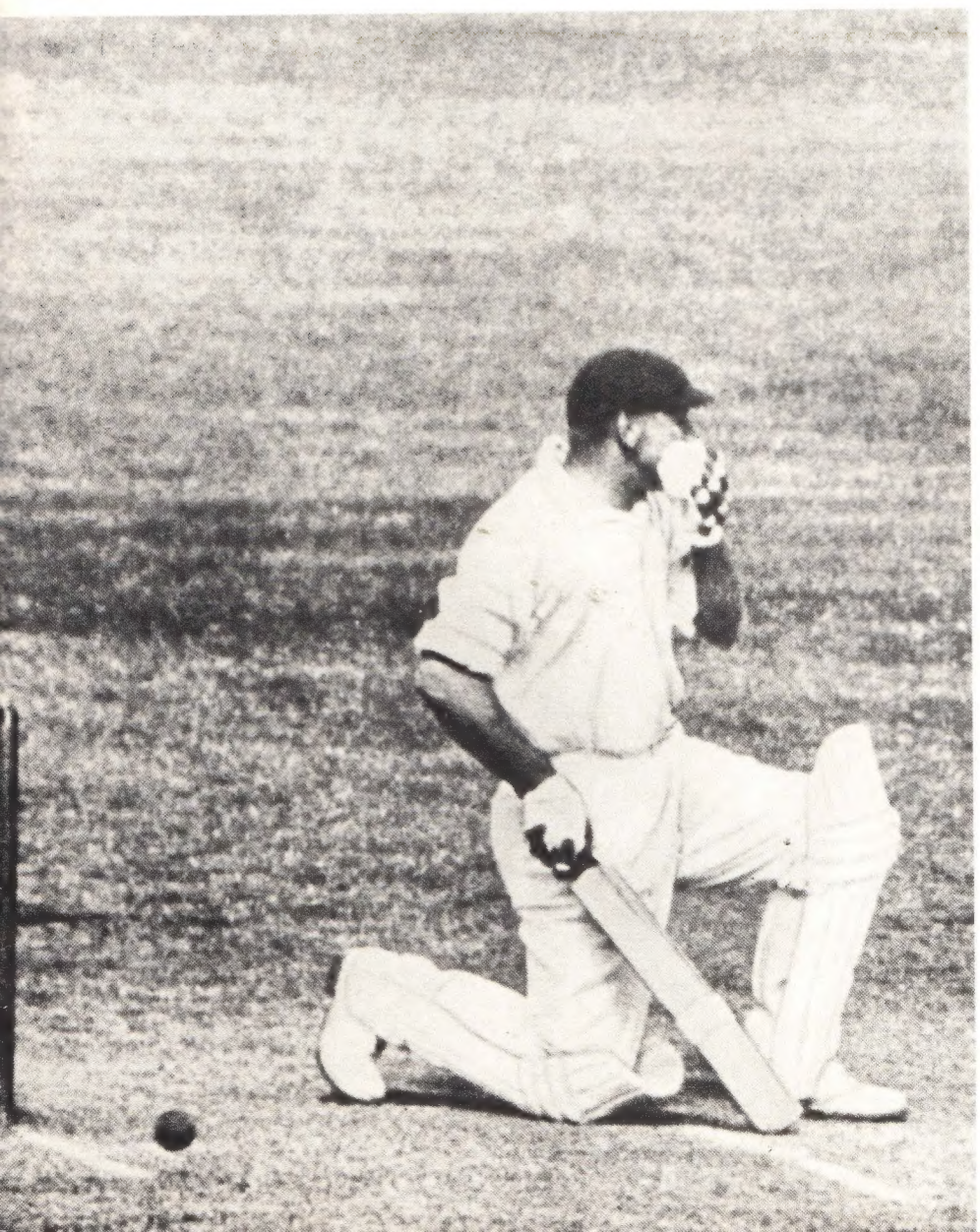
In Adelaide, Bradman was cowed into dodging Larwood's "bumpers," a feature of bodyline, or what the English called "leg theory bowling," whereby 100 m.p.h. deliveries were pitched short so that they bounced up at the batsman's head. More intrepid Australians, however, received serious injuries. Captain Bill Woodfull was hit over the heart; Bertie Oldfield suffered a fractured skull.

The Australian public were so enraged that Larwood feared he might have been lynched by onlookers, chanting "Bastard! Bastard!" but for his police protection.

Charging the English with "unsportsmanlike" tactics, the Australian cricketing board threatened an "upset" in "friendly relations" unless bodyline was immediately stopped. But only after the English returned home triumphant did the M.C.C. officially outlaw such tactics.

The England batsman, Bill Hammond, clutches his mouth after being hit by a retaliatory bouncer from Australian bowler, Bert Ironmonger, in the fifth test in Sydney.

The Australian captain, Bill Woodfull, ducks to avoid a Larwood bouncer. Such balls, if they did not injure the batsman, gave a distinct psychological advantage to the England team.



Mr. Punch lightheartedly suggests League of Nations arbitration to assuage the passions aroused by bodyline bowling. His good offices were not needed: Australia and England resolved their squabble.

III. The Last Achievement

In 1932 Great Britain adopted protective tariffs. Joseph Chamberlain's son Neville was the agent of this change and so far forgot the legacy of his imperialist father that he originally intended to impose duties on Commonwealth goods also. An urgent plea from the Canadian government caused him to relent and Commonwealth goods were temporarily exempted. Instead there was to be a gallant attempt to resurrect the economic unity of the Empire.

The result was a Commonwealth meeting at Ottawa in the summer of 1932. This was the only Imperial Conference ever held outside London – a striking gesture of imperial sentiment. The great gathering was a failure, the end of a dream. The Dominions were as much concerned to protect their industries as to benefit their farmers. The British ministers were still frightened of stomach taxes. Bennett, the Prime Minister of Canada, who presided, thought only of Canadian needs and forgot the imperial cause which he had once preached. In the end there was no economic charter of Empire, only 12 agreements over details of preference between Great Britain and the Dominions and between the Dominions themselves.

All the same Ottawa had some effect. Tariffs and preferences helped to shift British trade away from foreign countries to the Dominions and colonies. For now the dependent colonies too were brought within the imperial system. Hitherto Great Britain had claimed to administer the colonies as a sacred trust. Now she treated them as an undeveloped estate. The colonies were "invited" to give preferences to British goods and had no choice but to do so. The result was exactly as it had been with the original British Empire of the 18th Century. The colonies had accepted British suzerainty when it brought them security and good government. They grew restless when it made the goods in their shops more expensive, and the closed economic system which Great Britain imposed provoked an answering demand for colonial freedom.

The immediate benefit went to Great Britain. Between 1931 and 1937 British imports from the Dominions, India and the colonies increased from 24 per cent to 37 per cent of her total overseas trade; and British exports to them increased from 32 per cent to 39 per cent of the total. Ironically, though the British benefited, the Dominions, India and the colonies benefited more. Yet they were also more discontented. Great Britain was in fact no longer powerful enough and advanced enough economically to make the imperial partnership a reality, and the strains of war completed its dissolution.

The last remaining element of Empire was security. This was the ultimate benefit which Great Britain had bestowed on her colonies and Dominions throughout the 19th Century. The Royal Navy had ruled the waves, solely at the expense of the British taxpayer. British citizens still bore most of the burden. Canada was wealthy enough to provide for her own defence and in any case could assume that any threat to the New World would be resisted by all the might of the United States. Australia and New Zealand on the other hand still counted on British protection, particularly against Japan, and looked confidently to the great base at Singapore, which seemed to be the lynchpin of imperial defence. South Africa felt in no danger except perhaps from her own coloured people and tolerated the naval base at Simonstown mainly as a further guarantee of Boer independence. Eire was the strangest case. She was a small country, unable to defend herself against any resolute aggressor. De Valera accepted the protection of the Royal Navy and yet asserted Eire's neutrality as firmly against Great Britain as against any other power.

When the international scene grew darker, Great Britain alone seemed to be in trouble, and the Dominions would have liked to hold aloof. The Imperial Conference of 1937 – the last of the old sort ever held – insisted that Germany's march to European hegemony was a purely continental affair and that Great Britain should keep out of the quarrel. New Zealand and Australia had their own anxiety over Japan, and this made them especially emphatic for British detachment from Europe. The prompting from the Dominions largely contributed to the policy of appeasement towards Germany which Neville Chamberlain followed, and the agreement at Munich was welcomed enthusiastically by the Dominions. If war had broken out in 1938, Eire and South Africa certainly, and Canada probably, would have remained neutral; Australia and New Zealand would have followed Great Britain with reluctance.

Astonishingly, a year later, an almost united Commonwealth went to war. Eire remained neutral, and South Africa declared war only after a change of government. The other governments entered the war without hesitation or equivocation. All the assertions about Dominion independence, all the reservations about their not being committed by British obligations, were swept aside. Despite all constitutional changes, public opinion in the Dominions responded to the call of British sentiment. The peoples of the Dominions did not stop to ask whether they themselves were in danger. They did not contemplate for one moment the policy of benevolent neutrality which the United States followed until forced into war by attack from Japan. The Dominions acknowledged their solidarity with Great Britain and recognized, even more strongly than in 1914, that Great Britain was defending the principles of freedom and toleration in which they themselves had always believed.

Great Britain and the Dominions fought the Second World War with unparalleled mutual generosity and with a co-operation rarely interrupted by disputes. History affords few other examples of such unselfish partnership, and posterity will marvel that this partnership, so marvellously displayed in wartime, was after the war so casually and so completely dispelled. The words which Winston Churchill addressed to the British people on June 18, 1940, applied with equal force to the peoples of the Commonwealth: "If the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: 'This was the finest hour.'"

The British Commonwealth is already vanishing. But the memory of its last achievement will endure for ever.

Officers, 50th (The Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot, 1850